

Boise Basin Mercantile Company Block  
Northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets  
Idaho City  
Boise County  
Idaho

HABS No. ID-13

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ID-13

## BOISE BASIN MERCANTILE COMPANY BLOCK

Location: Northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets, Idaho City, Boise County, Idaho.

Latitude: 43° 49' 39" Longitude: 115° 49' 47".

Present Owner: Fred and Peggy Carlson.

Present Occupant: Boise Basin Mercantile Company.

Present Use: General store, state liquor store, and dry goods store.

Significance: The Boise Basin Mercantile Company is a block of three early "bricks" used as commercial institutions. The first "brick" on the northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets was originally a store, and later a bank. The second "brick" on Commercial Street was known as Thomas Barry's store. The third "brick", the present main building facing Main Street, has been a general store since construction.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: The first "brick", on the northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets, was built in 1865, but fire damaged it in 1867, and was rebuilt that year. The second "brick" on Commercial Street was built in 1867, and the third "brick", the present main building serving as a general store, in 1868.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Boise Basin Mercantile Company Block stands on lots One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Twelve and Thirteen, Block H in the Townsite of Idaho City Plat of 1915. Reference to the title is in Deed Books located at the County Recorder and Auditor's Office, Idaho City, Idaho.

1866 Deed, March 1, 1866 Deed Record 8, p. 635. Bailey Simpson to D. and J. Isaacs for \$1500. "The lot or parcel of land situate on the Southwest corner formed by the intersection of Main and Commercial Streets fronting twenty (20) feet on said Main Street and Sixty-four (64) feet on said Commercial.." (sic)

1869 Deed, February 24, 1869 in Deed Record 11, pp. 448-449. D. and J. Isaacs to J.G. Bryant for \$2050. "Located on the southwest corner of Block formed by the intersection of Main and Commercial Streets fronting (20) twenty feet on said Main Street and fifty-seven (57) feet on said Commercial.. being the brick store erected and occupied by D. and I. Isaacs as Merchants." (sic) This was the sale of the first building.

- 1869 Deed, February 24, 1869 recorded March 8, 1869 in Deed Record 12, pp. 297-299. D. Isaacs to Bailey Simpson for \$75. "Being all of that certain lot or parcel of land situate and fronting on Commercial Street...commencing at a point 57 feet from the intersection of Main and Commercial Streets...and immediately in the rear of the building of J.G. Bryant and running thence westerly and along the eastern boundary of Commercial seven feet to the property now owned by Bailey Simpson it being the remainder of an original plot of sixty-four feet seeded by Bailey Simpson to D. & J. Isaacs. The other (57) fifty-seven feet having been sold by D. & J. Isaacs to J.G. Bryant said lot running easterly 20 feet thence westerly 7 feet thence northerly 20 feet thence easterly 7 feet to the place of beginning."
- 1869 Deed, June 1, 1869 recorded June 15 1869 in Deed Record 12, pp. 59-60. Henry Holmes to Thomas Barry for \$1,100. "Commencing at a point on the southern line of Commercial Street midway between Main and Montgomery Streets and running thence westerly along the southern line of Commercial Street 20 feet Twenty feet more or less thence southerly and at right angles to said Commercial Street 40 feet more or less. Thence Easterly and parallel with first line 20 feet twenty feet more or less then northwardly 40 more or less to place of beginning...the same being the property conveyed by Chas. Bernstiel to Holms...Together with all and singular tenements one Brick house..."
- 1871 Deed, March 2, 1871 recorded March 25, 1871 in Deed Record 12, pp. 596-571. James Bryant to Lewis Eckhart and James Judge for \$2,416. "The undivided two thirds of that certain town lot...commencing for the beginning at the southwest corner of said town lot formed by the intersection of Main and Commercial Streets, running thence along the west side of Main Street twenty-six (26) thence in an easterly direction at right angles with Main Street and parallel with Commercial Street one hundred and fifteen (115) feet thence in a southerly direction at right angles with east line twenty-six (26) feet to Commercial Street, thence in a westerly direction along the north line of Commercial Street to the place of beginning being formerly known as the Boise Market lot also the undivided two thirds of the brick building stable and other buildings..."
- 1873 Deed, November 14, 1873 recorded in Deed Record 13, pp. 481-483. Lewis Eckhart and James Judge to G.W. Moore, C.S. Kingsley, Z.E. Elkin, I.H. Bowman, G.T. Keys. "Whereas the said parties of the first part are justly indebted to sundry persons, in divers sum of money which they are unable to pay and have agreed to convey and assign all of their estate and effects for the benefit of their creditors."
- 1891 Deed, August 29, recorded September 1, 1891 in Deed Record 22, pp. 563-564. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Davis and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Davis to J.A. Lippincott and William Warner for \$600. "That certain lot...on the west side of Main Street between Commercial and Wallula Streets, bounded on the north by the Brick Building occupied by Boise County Bank, on the south by a small frame building

owned by W.R. Reeves (used as a warehouse) and the barn of W. R. Reeves and on the west by the brick cellar and frame building hereinafter described. Together with the brick building situated thereon used by parties of the first part a store...also that certain lot on the south side of Commercial Street between Main and Montgomery Street bounded on east by the Boise County Bank building and the lot above described on the west by Thomas Barry's brick building and on the south by William Bunkers stable, together with brick cellar and frame office building thereon."

1892 Deed, April 14, 1892 recorded in Deed Record 17, pp. 297-298. Fred Small, Marty F. Small and B.F. Simpson to Sam and R.K. Davis for \$500, "situated on the west side of Main Street between Commercial and Wallula Streets, and being bounded on the north by the brick building occupied by the Boise County Bank, on the south by a small frame building owned by William Barker, and the stable of William Barker and on the West by brick cellar and frame building hereafter described. Together with the brick building situated thereon...said building now occupied by Davis Bros. and used by them as a General Merchandise Store. Also all right, title and interest of said parties of the first part of in and to that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, situate, lying and being on the south side of Commercial Street between Main and Montgomery Streets bounded on the east by the building occupied by the Boise County Bank, and the lot first above described on the west by Thomas Barry's brick building and on the south by William Barker's Stable, together with the brick cellar and frame building thereon, said cellar and frame building being used at the present time by Davis Bros. for warehouses..."

1903\* Deed, May 4, 1903 in Deed Record 24, pp. 301-302. Thomas Barry to E.W. Barry for \$1. "Commencing at the northeast corner of Barry's Store thence running 100 feet more or less in a westerly direction along the south line of Commercial Street to the east line of Montgomery Street, thence running in a southerly direction along the west line of Montgomery Street 30 feet more or less to "Reeves Stable" thence running 100 feet more or less along the north line of stable and lot owned by W.R. Reeves to the property of Lippincott and Warner thence running 30 feet in a northerly direction along the west line of the Lippincott and Warner property to the south line of Commercial Street the place of beginning. The above described property is commonly known as Barry's Store. Together with the stock of merchandise therein stored." \*denotes additional property included in deed.

1907 Deed, April 2, 1907 in Deed Record 30, p. 30 E.W. Barry and Mary E. Barry to Lippincott and Warner for \$1. "Commencing at the northeast corner of Barry's store running thence 75 feet more or less in a westerly direction along the south line of Commercial to the east line of Montgomery St. Thence in a southerly direction along the east line of Montgomery St. 30 feet more or less to Lippincott

and Warner...thence 75 feet more or less to Lippincott and Warner to their brick cellar thence 30 feet or more northerly to Commercial St. to the place of beginning. The above described property is commonly known as Barry's Store consisting of brick building and wooden building and both facing on Commercial St..."

- 1909 Deed, December 10, 1909 in Deed Record 33 p. 27. Martha McCarty, Administratrix of the estate of J.H. McCarty, deceased, to Crawford Moore for \$1. Lot and brick building at the intersection of Main and Commercial. 27 feet fronting on Main and 57 feet fronting on Commercial.
- 1910 Deed, August 3, 1910 in Deed Record 33, p. 69. Crawford Moore to C.F. Herrick for \$2,200.
- 1910 Deed, October 5, 1910 in Deed Record 33, p. 70. C.F. Herrick to Boise Basin Bank "that certain lot and brick building thereon heretofore used as a Banking house, located on the northeast corner of the block formed by the intersection of Main and Commercial Street...together with two safes, scales, assay material and all fixtures belonging to me in said building."
- 1915 Deed, September 21, 1915 recorded in Deed Record 41, p. 15. John H. Myer, Probate Judge, to J.A. Lippincott and William Warner, "all the following described pieces and parcels of land, situate within and upon and being a portion of the Townsite of Idaho City in the County of Boise, and the State of Idaho, to wit:
- ...Lots Two, Three, Four, Five, Twelve, Thirteen, Block H according to the official plat of the Townsite of Idaho City now on file in the office of the County Recorder of said Boise County."
- 1915 Deed, September 21, 1915. John H. Myer, Probate Judge, to Boise Basin Bank. Lot One, Block H.
- 1920 Deed, September 2, 1920 recorded in Deed Record 43, p. 29. Boise Basin Bank, a corporation, J.A. Lippincott, President, to Nelson Bottcher for \$1,000. Lot One Block H.
- 1920 Mortgage, September 2, 1920 recorded on September 4, 1920 in Book of Mortgages 20, p. 245. Bottcher, mortgagee, Boise Basin Bank mortgager.
- 1926 Deed, April 19, 1926 in Deed Record 43, p. 384. J.A. Lippincott and William Warner to Boise Basin Mercantile Company, a Corporation for \$100. Lots 2,3,4,5,12, and 13 in Block H and Lots 8 and 9 in Block J.
- 1935 Mortgage, January 29, 1935 recorded in Book of Mortgages 23, p. 147 Nelson Bottcher, mortgager, to Mrs. F.P. Willis, mortgagee for \$300. "All of Lot 1 in Block H."

- 1938 Release of Mortgages, May 2, 1938 recorded in Release of Mortgages Book 5, p. 215. "Mortgage is fully paid, released, satisfied and discharged," by Mrs. F.P. (Nellie) Willis
- 1938 Deed, April 11, 1938 recorded in Deed Record 48, p. 459. Harry Palmer, administrator of the estate of Nelson Bottcher, deceased, and Nellie Willis for \$400. Lot 1 of Block H.
- 1948 Decree, March 1, 1948 recorded March 12, 1948 in Deed Record 52, pp. 340-341. Henry O. Willis, executor of the estate of Nellie Willis, who died February 13, 1947, left to Joseph W. Duquette Lot 1 in Block H.
- 1947/1948 Warranty Deed, July 30, 1947 recorded October 8, 1948 in Deed Record 52, p. 427. Joseph W. Duquette to Boise Basin Mercantile Co. for \$10. Lot 1 in Block H.
- 1960 Warranty Deed, July 30, 1960 recorded in Deed Record 57, p. 168 Arthur L. and Mary Baker to Jesse C. and Myrtle Pennington. Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5 in Block H, "said interest of sellers being one-half (1/2) partnership-ownership in the aforesaid real property."
- 1964 Miscellaneous, May 15, 1964 recorded in Miscellaneous Book 12, p. 312. Myrtle S. Pennington to T.D. Ross "Partnership interest (one-half) of Boise Basin Mercantile, located at Idaho City, Idaho, including partnership interest in the following described real property, to wit: Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5, Block H, Idaho City Townsite..."
- 1964 Warranty Deed, November 2, 1964, recorded November 3, 1964 in Deed Record 57, p. 484. Edward G. and May Harlan to Myrtle Pennington, "Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5, Block H, Idaho City Townsite, Boise County, Idaho."
- 1965 Lease, August 3, 1965, recorded in Book of Leases 4, p. 253. Myrtle Pennington to Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company for a three year lease (\$300 per year) of a back room in the one-story brick building on Lot 1, Block H.
- 1967 Warranty Deed, August 26, 1967, recorded October 6, 1967 in Deed Record 58, p. 629. L.D. Jackson, Edna Jackson to Neale Gardner and Barbara Gardner for \$10. Lots 12 and 13 in Block H.
- 1968 Assignment of Lease as Security, April 9, 1968, recorded June 4, 1970 in Book of Mortgage Assignments 1, pp. 440-41. Ted and Myrtle Ross to First Security Bank of Idaho.
- 1970 Deed of Trust with Power of Sale, June 15, 1970, recorded July 15, 1970 in Book of Mortgages 27, pp. 104-05. "Block H: Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5 Idaho City Townsite, Boise County, Idaho.
- 1971 Miscellaneous, March 3, 1971, recorded in Miscellaneous Book 27, p. 135. Notice of sale: Ted Ross and Myrtle Ross to Fred and Peggy Carlson, "Store Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5, Block H and Lot 9, Block F and West 87 feet of Lot 8, Block J of the Townsite of Idaho City.

1973 Warranty Deed, July 6, 1973 recorded July 25, 1973 Clifford Gardner and Barbara Gardner to Fred and Peggy Carlson. Lots 12 and 13 in Block H.

4. Builder, contractor and suppliers: D. and J. Isaacs probably only rebuilt the first "brick" following the fire in 1867. Bailey Simpson built the third building in 1868.
5. Original plan and construction: All three buildings are local low fired brick.
6. Alterations and additions: The first building on the northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets was remodeled in 1870 for use as a bank, again around 1920 for the Post Office, and most recently in 1972 for a general store. A wooden frame addition attached to the west side of the bank was built at an unknown date. The old store building facing Commercial Street, which has been slightly altered, is joined by two additions on the east and west sides. It is not known when these additions were constructed. The present store facing Main Street has an addition on the west (rear) end. This addition is also attached to the south side of the old store and the additions that face Commercial Street. The store is also attached to a small wooden frame addition on its south side. No construction date is known for either addition.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Boise Basin Mercantile Company is composed of three brick buildings, all built within the first five years of Idaho City's founding in 1863. Presently a gift shop the original red brick building on the northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets was built in 1865 as a store. This fireproof brick survived, at least partially, Idaho City's second disastrous fire on May 17, 1867, and was rebuilt. That year the second building, known as Barry's store, was constructed on Commercial Street. The following year Bailey Simpson put up his "brick" on the south side of the original corner building, facing Main Street.

In 1870 the Boise County Bank, an agency of the Idaho City Branch of the Idaho First National Bank, remodeled the original corner building into a bank and remained in business there until 1909. Thomas Barry stayed at his "universal store" (the second building) until his death in 1903. The present general store section of the third building began its long history as a general store over a century ago. By the 1920s the Boise Basin Mercantile Company was formed; at this time the Post Office occupied the former bank (the original building) and remained there until 1972.

Many of Idaho City's most important merchants sold their wares in the Boise Basin Mercantile store. J.G. Bryant, one of the town's most successful early merchants, occupied the building; the Davis Brothers,

whose father, Ben Davis, was Jefferson Davis' nephew, owned and operated it in the last decades of the 19th century; Lippincott and Warner, also merchants, were situated there after the turn of the 20th century.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: A photocopy of old photo shows the interior view of the Boise Basin Mercantile Store, circa turn of the 20th century. Original photograph at Boise Basin Museum, Idaho City, Idaho. Included in the HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Barry, William C. "Correspondence" to Fred C. Humphreys,  
May 3, 1973.

Barry, William C. The History of the Boise County Bank Agency  
of the First National Bank of Idaho. Unpublished typescript,  
May 3, 1973.

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Interviews: John Brogan, Kitty Brogan and Harvey Palmer,  
May 29, 1974.

Interview: William C. Barry, June 1974.

Moore, C.W. Correspondence with E.W. Barry, December 3, 1909.

- b. Secondary and published sources:

Adams, Francis. Idaho City, Queen of the Gold Camps.  
Idaho City: Idaho World, 1953.

Byrd, Annie Laurie. Boise, the Peace Valley,  
Caldwell: Caxton 1934.

Elliott's History of Idaho. San Francisco: Elliott, 1884;  
reprinted, Fairfield, 1971.

Boise News. Newspaper articles, 1813-64. Idaho City, Idaho.

Idaho World. Newspaper articles, 1864-81, 1886, 1891, 1913, 1916.  
Idaho City, Idaho.

Prepared by Alan Minskoff  
Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1974

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The block, containing the Boise Basin Mercantile Company, the former Boise County Bank and an early store, is constructed of fire resistant, low-fired brick with clay used as the brick mortar. The attics in the three original buildings have layers of brick covered with four inches of earth placed on the attic floors. All openings were shuttered with metal or metal-covered wood to act as a deterrant to the major fires.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

### 2. Description of Interior:

1. Overall dimensions: The "L" shaped brick and frame block measures approximately 53' (four-bay front) x 111'.
2. Foundations: The foundation in the original corner building is brick and stone, and the foundation below the frame addition on the west side of this building is concrete. Both the second and third buildings have brick and stone foundations. A concrete foundation supports the frame addition on the south side of the present store.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: All walls of the three original buildings are brick with clay mortar, and are painted red. The addition on the west side of the present store is concrete in the lower portion and brick in the upper portion. The addition on the west side of the corner building has clapboard siding painted white. The addition on the east side of the old store building is of concrete block. Another addition attached to this building on the west side is brick with lime mortar and concrete block on the west wall.
4. Structural system, framing: The original block of three buildings is basically a brick bearing wall structure with wooden frame floor, ceiling and roof construction. The ceiling joists carry not only the ceiling load but also the attic floor load which consists of brick with four inches of earth on the attic floors.
5. Covered walks: There is a covered walk on the east (front) side of the block which extends along the north side. The columns supporting the shed roof are simple in design.

6. Chimneys: There are four brick chimneys on the roofs in the entire block. One chimney projects through the center of the Boise Basin Mercantile Company roof. The chimney on the original corner building no longer projects. A chimney projects from the clapboard-clad addition on the west side of the corner building. The old store building on Commercial Street has a projecting chimney in the center of the roof.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The front facade consists of four arched openings with double doors. Two pairs of double doors on the left side of this facade each have a glass light and two bottom vertical panels. To the right of this are two other pairs of double doors, of which each have two glass lights and a bottom horizontal panel. Three openings have metal shutters. The frame addition attached to the south side of the present store has a pair of double doors, each with eight lights and a bottom panel. The door on the north side of the corner building is a six-light and single panel door with a brick lintel. It is presently closed with shutters. A frame addition on the west side of the corner building has a glass-paned door with shutters. The old store building facing Commercial Street is entered by two pairs of multi-paneled double doors. The back door of the old store has a large glass light with small four-light sidelights and two-light top and bottom lights, and below this are two panels. An arched brick lintel is above this door. A board and batten door covered with metal shutters opens into an addition attached to the old store building on the west side. The door in the back of this addition is an eight-light and two-paneled door.
  - b. Windows and shutters: No windows exist in the front facade of the Boise Basin Mercantile Company. The corner building on the north side of the block has a one-over-one double hung sash window which is now closed by metal shutters. A similar opening with shutters is the only opening for the frame addition on the west side of the corner building. Two one-over-one double hung sash windows with shutters and brick lintels light the middle portion of the present store on the south side.
8. Roof: The roof is a combination of gable and shed roof forms covered with corrugated metal roofing. The front gable end is clapboard, and contains the store's commercial name, "The Boise Basin Merc. 1870."

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The front portion of the Boise Basin Mercantile Company has a basement which is accessible either through a stairway on the east side, or an interior stairway with a first floor

trap door at the southwest corner. The central portion of the present store is used as a crawl space. Another basement is under the corner bank building, accessible through a trap door at the northwest corner. The old store building facing Commercial Street has a basement which is accessible by a trap door at the northeast corner. A crawl space is under the addition on the west side of the old store.

- b. First floor: The entrance into the Boise Basin Mercantile Company is through two doorways in the east side of the block. The present store has a long, open space which continues to the addition on the west side of the second building (the old store). There are no partitions within this space. Openings have been cut into the wall in the west and the north from this space to allow access to the old store and bank buildings respectively. The main access to the corner bank building is through two openings in the east side of the block. These openings open into a main banking room which at one time was defined by tellers' cages in a floor to ceiling partition. This partition is now gone. An opening in the west wall of this room leads to a back room which was once an office and assay area. There is a large furnace in the east side of this room. There is an exit to the Commercial Street from the north side of this room. The old store building was entered from the two sets of doors on the north side of the block. There was a partition to close off the storage space in the south end. Access to this building is now through the opening to the present store or the two rear doors.
2. Flooring: Most areas in the block have pine flooring.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The brick walls are plastered in the three original buildings, and in the addition on the west end of the present store building. The walls in the store are wallpapered as is the ceiling, and are painted with a cream colored paint. The walls in the corner bank building are covered with a paneling. The east wall has wooden neo-classical details between and over the main entry doors. The ceiling in this portion of the block is tongue-and-groove. The old store building has wallpaper on plaster walls and a tongue-and-groove ceiling.
4. Doors: Since the interior doors were removed from the block, their physical characteristics are not known. The door trim is simple.
5. Hardware: Original hardware with decorative cast back plates and handles can be seen on the front entry doors to the present store and the old bank.
6. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating, ventilation: Heating is by heaters fueled by fossil fuel and by wood burning stoves. A large furnace of brick construction is in the east wall of the assay room in the corner

bank building. A large vent for this furnace is located in the brick underpinning of the furnace.

b. Lighting: Knob and tube wiring furnishes electrical supply to incandescent lighting.

9. Notable original furniture: There is an original burglar and fire-proof safe in the west wall of the main banking room. It was manufactured by Lillie in Troy, New York, and its doors have decorative arched panels.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The block is on the northeast corner of Main and Commercial Streets. The present store faces Main Street and the bank and the old store face Commercial Street. There are vacant lots off the non-street sides of the block.

Prepared by William B. McCroskey  
Project Director  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Idaho City project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), in cooperation with the Idaho Bicentennial Commission in the summer of 1974. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by William B. McCroskey (University of Idaho), the project director; Alan Minskoff (University of Chicago), the project historian; Jack W. Schafer (University of Cincinnati), the project foreman, and the student assistant architects, Rae F. Noritake (University of Idaho), Laurence Ferar (University of Oregon), and Mark T. Wellen (Texas Tech University). William Klein, a HABS staff architect in the Washington office, edited the drawings in 1975. The written architectural and historical data was edited in April 1980 by Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington office. The documentary photographs were made by Duane Garrett in 1976.